

IS SOMEBODY KIDDING THE PUBLIC?

Cubans Deny Kennedy Men Told Them He'd Weakened Invasion

(See editorial on Page 28)

By JOHN T. O'ROURKE

Another big lie—or something so like one that it is almost impossible to tell the difference—about the White House's role in the Cuban invasion disaster, was unveiled for public view yesterday.

Until yesterday, members of the Cuban Revolutionary Council have been publicly silent on the following questions:

1. Whether or not they were told that President Kennedy had altered at the last minute, by refusing to permit U. S. air cover, the original plan which provided it.
2. Whether or not they approved the change.
3. Whether or not they decided to go forward with the invasion anyhow.

It has been the Administration line to imply that the decision rested with the Cuban leaders, and that they had decided to go ahead.

DENIAL

Dr. Antonio de Varona, one of the Revolutionary Council leaders and speaking in its name, yesterday categorically denied all three points.

He says:

1. They were not told that President Kennedy had last minute altered the plan by refusing to let U. S. planes cover the landing.
2. That therefore they never approved the change, since they didn't know it.
3. That they were given the opportunity to decide whether to go ahead, or even to delay.



ANTONIO DE VARONA

This has been the private position of the Council since the disaster, but all members of it were reluctant to place themselves in controversy with the Administration on these points because until recently they were never flatly stated in public.

NOW IT'S OUT

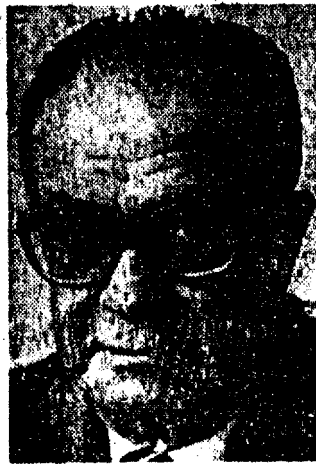
What tore it was a recent article in the Saturday Evening Post, which, while critical, pretty effectively belled out President Kennedy and put the onus on the Council for going ahead with President Kennedy's emasculated version of the invasion.

Two weeks ago, in the Saturday Post, Stewart Alsop wrote:

"The next day (April 5) Kennedy called a meeting at his office attended by Rusk (Secretary of State), McNamara (Secretary of Defense) and Allen Dulles (head of the CIA). At this meeting Kennedy made his decision to go ahead with the operation.

He ruled, under no circumstances whatever, that American forces be involved.

Then, the Cuban lead-



JOSE MIRO CARDONA

ers must be categorically warned in advance of this decision. Berle (special State Department official and Schlesinger (White House aide) were accordingly sent to New York to inform the Cuban leaders who unanimously opted to go ahead with the plan regardless."

TOO MUCH

Apparently the Council members believe Satevepost Editor Alsop was fed this by the White House, that it is too much for them to take, and they have decided to break silence and officially challenge it.

And so yesterday, in a letter to Mr. Alsop, Dr. Varona simply said it wasn't so. He sent a copy of it to the publisher of Miami's Spanish language newspaper, which was the first to publish it. It said:

"You incur . . . error, and surely to inaccurate information, in stating that the Cuban Revolutionary Council leaders approved the invasion plans in spite of the fact that we (were) informed by Messrs. Berle and Schlesinger that the U. S. Government would not offer us the necessary military aid. . . .

"That statement is against the truth; for which reason I find myself forced to declare that at no time were we advised that the Cuban patriots would lack the promised air and naval protection, nor were we informed of the date and place of the landing."

Dr. Varona concluded his letter by saying: "I leave to historians the delicate task of judging the facts and attributing the responsibilities."

Dr. Varona's son was in the ill-fated invasion force, as were the sons of several other Council members, including the son of Dr. Jose Miro Cardona, the Council's chairman and the prospective provisional president if the attempt had succeeded.

THEY'RE UNANIMOUS

All members of the Council had previously told Scripps-Howard representatives and other Washington newspapermen that they not only were unaware of what the CIA had afoot, but that they were virtual prisoners of the CIA during the entire disaster. They were flown from Miami to Washington, from Washington to New York, driven around Long Island in cars and then to Philadelphia and finally flown from there to a marine base at Opalaca, Fla., where they were held in what